



HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE

Democratic Caucus

The Honorable John M. Spratt Jr. ■ Ranking Democratic Member

B-71 Cannon HOB ■ Washington, DC 20515 ■ 202-226-7200 ■ www.house.gov/budget_democrats

November 4, 2003

House Republicans Fail to Fully Fund Veterans Medical Care

Dear Democratic Colleague:

As Veterans Day approaches, it is instructive to review the Republican record this year on funding for veterans programs. House Republicans began the year by cutting veterans benefits. When Democrats and veterans groups opposed those cuts, most of them were restored, and Republicans even promised an increase in funding for 2004. But thus far they have failed to deliver on that promise.

In March, the House Republicans passed their ten-year budget resolution. The House resolution cut funding over the next ten years for medical care and other appropriated veterans programs by \$14.2 billion below current services levels, and \$8.8 billion below the levels in the President's budget, as estimated by CBO. The House resolution also cut funding for mandatory veterans programs by \$14.2 billion over ten years.

In the face of strong protest from veterans groups and Democrats, Republicans adopted a budget resolution conference report that dropped the cuts in mandatory programs. The budget resolution conference report also increased funding for appropriated veterans programs in 2004 by \$2.6 billion above current services levels. This represented an increase of \$1.8 billion over the President's 2004 budget request, which was \$0.8 billion above the 2004 current services level. Despite this increase in 2004, the conference report left in place funding cuts for appropriated veterans programs totaling \$6.2 billion below current services over ten years.

Unfortunately, House Republicans have yet to make good on their promises for increased veterans funding for 2004. The House has now passed all thirteen appropriation bills and the actual funding provided for appropriated veterans programs in the House-passed appropriations bills is \$28.1 billion - the same level contained in the President's budget. In other words, so far the House Republicans have not delivered one dime of the \$1.8 billion increase above the President's budget that they called for in their budget resolution.

It now appears that when the VA-HUD appropriations bill emerges from conference, the House will agree to a Senate provision that provides a \$1.3 billion increase above the President's budget request. Even if this funding is included in the conference report, it will still fall \$500 million short of the 2004 funding level for veterans that Republicans promised in their budget resolution. And their budget still calls for \$6.2 billion in cuts below current services over the next decade.

Democrats will continue to fight to for veterans programs.

Sincerely,

/s

John M. Spratt, Jr.

Ranking Democratic Member